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ABSTRACT

Views concerning the participation of nontenure-track faculty in campus governance were surveyed at Towson State University (Maryland). In spring 1985, a questionnaire was sent to all 425 full-time faculty members at the university, and 298 responses were obtained. Only 3% of nontenure-track faculty responded to the questionnaire, compared to 70% of tenured and tenure-track faculty. The sample was overrepresented by both tenure-track faculty and those in the upper ranks of professor and associate professor, and underrepresented by those with the fewest years of service at the university. The questionnaire focused on the level of governance at which participation might occur, the nature of participation, and whether or not nontenure-track faculty should be permitted or expected to participate. There was stronger agreement that nontenure-track faculty should be expected and/or permitted to participate in governance at the departmental level than at the university senate level, where attitudes were more polarized. Attitudes by rank, age, college, and other variables were assessed. (SW)

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SHOULD NON-TENURE TRACK FACULTY PARTICIPATE IN UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE? AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF FACULTY ATTITUDES

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Ann K. Dickey, Chair
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SHOULD NON-TENURE-TRACK FACULTY PARTICIPATE IN UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE? - AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF FACULTY ATTITUDES

ABSTRACT

The increasing number of non-tenure track positions on university campuses raises issues regarding participation in campus governance at all levels. To what extent should non-tenure-track faculty be expected or permitted to participate? A survey to all (N=425) full-time faculty at a Mid-Atlantic state university of 15,000 students yielded a 70 percent response rate to this issue. Agreement that non-tenure-track faculty should be expected and/or permitted to participate in governance at the department level was much stronger than at the university senate level, where attitudes were more polarized. Attitudes by rank, age, college, and other "predictor" variables were subjected to statistical analyses, and the perceived significance of participation in governance was assessed.

INTRODUCTION AND PERSPECTIVE

The hiring of college and university faculty into non-tenure-track positions is a relatively recent phenomenon. An article by Thomson and Sandalow (1978) contains one of the early references to be found in the literature. The appointment of new faculty to full-time non-tenure-track positions has become an increasingly accepted and popular administrative response to at least three significant factors: actual or anticipated overall enrollment declines; specific discipline enrollment declines as students tend to major in newer professional fields at the expense of the traditional education, liberal arts, and sciences; and higher numbers of aging tenured faculty with diminished prospects for inter-institutional mobility.

In their recent study, Mortimer, Bagshaw and Masland (1985) report that in the fall of 1981, 65% of 4-year colleges and universities had full-time faculty in non-tenure-track appointments, accounting for 12% of all full-time faculty. Additionally, nearly one-third of the full-time appointments in political science and two-thirds of those in English are non-tenure-track.

If the numbers of non-tenure-track faculty continue to grow, issues of morale and expectations caused by their status will have to be addressed. One of these issues is likely to be their role in governance.

Historically, the role of the full-time faculty member has been to participate fully in governance at the departmental level and to various degrees at the college/school and university

levels. It has been assumed that this participation was both a right and a professional obligation of faculty. The intent was to shape and control the work environment, making the university academically strong and achieving a cohesiveness of thought and purpose through agreement - if not consensus - about the way the university should be run, particularly with regard to academic standards and curriculum.

But what happens to institutional governance when a significant percentage of the faculty is non-tenure-track? Do such faculty represent an asset or a threat to the academic community because their attitudes or their duties differ from those who are tenured or in the tenure track? More specifically, what direct or indirect effects might be seen in the governance of the university? On the one hand, what are the benefits and liabilities if non-tenure-track faculty are expected or obligated to participate in governance? On the other hand, if they are denied participation in governance at any level, what are the implications for the tenured and tenure-track faculty, especially as regards workload?

These and related questions and issues became matters of concern at Towson State University in the academic year 1984. In view of the recent and projected growth in the numbers and proportions of non-tenure-track faculty, the president of the university charged a faculty committee with the responsibility of making recommendations regarding the appropriate role of non-tenure-track-faculty in governance. At that time, and currently, opportunities for participation by non-tenure-track faculty were

very limited. In fact, the constitution of the University Senate restricts participation in University governance (senate and senate committees) to tenured and tenure-track faculty. While some variability exists in the constitutions and practices of colleges and schools, substantial variability in the participation of non-tenure-track faculty occurs at the department level.

PROCEDURE

The committee began its work by conducting an extensive review of pertinent and related literature, including the works of Thomson and Sandalow (1978); Mortimer, Bagshaw and Masland (1985); Heller (1985); Carr (1974); Kauffman (1972); Ikenberry (1972); Duryea (1971); Eckert (1970); Rosenzweig (1970); Pfnister (1970); Vernon (1983); Mortimer (1971a); O Neil (1971); Mortimer (1971b); Hodgkinson (1971); McConnell and Mortimer (1971); Williams (1968); a report on departmental governance from Duke University (1970); recent issues of Academe (1981 and 1986); and the constitutions of several colleges and universities.

The literature yielded little information bearing directly upon experiences with and attitudes toward participation by non-tenure-track faculty in governance. It did, however, sensitize the committee to a variety of traditional and emerging issues pertaining to participation in governance as a right and responsibility of faculty.

Unable to identify external precedents that might guide its deliberations, the committee decided to undertake a survey of faculty attitudes on the subject. The authors were delegated that responsibility.

A thirteen-page questionnaire was developed, and it underwent extensive revision and refinement based upon meticulous reviews by methodologically-sophisticated faculty as well as pilot tests with representative faculty.

The survey instrument, with an appropriate cover letter describing the purpose and importance of the study, were sent in the Spring of 1985 to all 425 full-time faculty members at Towson State University. Two follow-up mailings yielded 298 returns, a response rate of 70%.

Analysis of demographic information revealed that the sample was quite representative of the population in terms of college/school membership, age, and sex. However, a bias did exist in over-representation of those with tenure and those in the upper ranks of professor and associate professor. Similarly, there was an under-representation of those with the fewest years of service at the institution. Curiously, only two (out of thirty-nine) respondents identified themselves as non-tenure-track faculty.

While the actual survey instrument consisted of over seventy items covering a wide range of attitudes and demographic data, the present study focuses upon three primary issues: (a) the level of governance at which participation might occur; (b) the nature of participation; and (c) whether or not non-tenure-track

faculty should be permitted or expected to participate. An attempt was made to address the complexity of each issue.

Concerning the level of governance, it was believed that expectations or permission for participation might vary as the level of governance progressed from the department to the college/school to the University Senate and its committees. Perhaps it might be more appropriate to encourage full participation at the departmental level where collegial interaction is likely to be more frequent and where the issues tend to be of more immediate relevance. Perhaps issues at the college/school and university levels would be perceived as being more involved with broader philosophical issues and long-range planning, such that it would be less appropriate for non-tenure-track faculty to participate.

With regard to the nature of participation, participation might be defined as consisting of voting rights, voice, attendance and such responsibilities as committee obligations. Participation might be defined to include membership with all rights and responsibilities. Equally possible might be limiting the influence of non-tenure-track faculty by denying any combination of vote, voice or sharing in the work of governing and decision making.

Cutting across both the nature of participation and the level of governance is the issue of whether non-tenure-track faculty should be permitted or expected to participate. Permitting participation would imply acceptance of the rights of non-tenure-track faculty equal to those of tenured and tenure-

track, while expecting them to participate would similarly imply equality as regards the matter of responsibilities.

FINDINGS

The data of Table 1 reveal the attitudes of tenured and tenure-track faculty towards the right and responsibility of non-tenure track faculty to participate in governance at the university, college and departmental levels. The responses to Question A show that the expectation of participation in governance increased as the level of governance moved from Senate to department, where participation was strongly expected.

As the responses to Question B suggest, there was less disagreement about and more willingness to permit faculty to participate than to expect them to do so. However, while nearly half of the respondents were positive about permitting faculty to participate at the university level, nearly 40% disagreed. Permission to participate was stronger with lower levels of governance.

The response to Question C shows that the majority of faculty disagrees that participation is a benefit to be reserved for tenured and tenure-track faculty, particularly at the departmental level. While somewhat less permissive attitudes are revealed in answers to the statement that "governance should be by those with a vested interest only (Question D)," the tendency toward greater support for participation at the departmental level is consistent with the responses to the preceding items.

Table 1: Attitudes of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty (N=296) Towards the Right and Responsibility of Non-Tenure Track Faculty Participation in Governance, by Level of Governance.

Questionnaire Item — Item description and response distribution (%)*

A. Response to "Non-Tenure Track Faculty should be expected [have the responsibility] to participate in governance."

Level of Governance	% of SD + D	% of SA + A	% of U	% of NR	Total %
University	53	31	12	4	100
College	40	46	9	5	100
Department	18	70	7	5	100

B. Response to "Non-Tenure Track Faculty Should be permitted [have the right] to participate in governance."

Level of Governance	% of SD + D	% of SA + A	% of U	% of NR	Total %
University	39	49	9	4	100
College	29	61	5	5	100
Department	17	74	5	4	100

C. Response to "Participation is a benefit to be reserved for tenured and tenure-track faculty."

Level of Governance	% of SD + D	% of SA + A	% of U	% of NR	Total %
University	52	36	10	2	100
College	59	27	9	5	100
Department	70	17	8	5	100

Table 1: (continued)

Questionnaire Item — Item description and response distribution (%)*

D. Responses to "Governance should be by those with a vested interest only."

Level of Governance	% of SD + D	% of SA + A	% of U	% of NR	Total %
University	43	41	13	3	100
College	49	34	12	5	100
Department	63	24	8	5	100

* Responses were coded as follows:

SD = Strongly Disagree
D = Disagree
SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
U = Undecided
NR = No Response

The data of Table 2 summarize faculty attitudes toward acceptable roles in governance for non-tenure track faculty at four levels of governance. While nearly one-third of the faculty believed that non-tenure track faculty should not have membership at the Senate level, this feeling diminished at lower levels of governance. Slightly more than one-third believed in full membership at the Senate level, and this feeling increased to 60% at the department level. A very consistent 3% believed in voting privileges with no responsibilities. And a nearly consistent 10-12% believed in responsibilities with no vote.

Table 2: Attitudes of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty (N=296) Toward Acceptable Roles in Governance of Non-Tenure Track Faculty at Various Levels of Governance.

Questionnaire Item ____ Item description and response distribution (%)

E. Summary of responses toward acceptable roles at various levels of governance.

Level of Governance	% of Membership Responsibility: Voting Rights	% of Membership Responsibility: No Voting Rights	% of Membership: Voting But No Responsibility	% of Membership: No Responsibility and No Vote	% of: No Membership	% of: No Response	Total %
University Senate	36	10	3	14	32	5	100
Senate Committees	39	10	3	15	27	6	100
College/ School	45	12	3	13	23	4	100
Depart-ment	62	12	3	8	11	4	100

One important related aspect of our study sought to determine the perceived benefits and rewards regarding professional development and advancement that might accrue from participation in governance at various levels. Table 3 summarizes the findings pertaining to professional development opportunities. Opportunities for learning were perceived to be greater at the lower levels of governance, as was the opportunity to make a contribution to policy formulation/ implementation. These opportunities were generally believed to be at least

somewhat important at all levels of governance. About one-third of the respondents saw little opportunity to learn management techniques/issues at any level of governance. As would be expected, the opportunities to interact with those in other disciplines and to become better known to colleagues were perceived to be very important at all levels, especially at the college and university levels.

Table 3: Professional Development Opportunities Accruing From Participation in Governance as Perceived by Tenured and Non-Tenure Track Faculty (N=296), by Level of Governance.

Questionnaire Item	Item description and response distribution (%)				
F.	Summary of perceived opportunities accruing from participation in governance.				
		DEGREE OF IMPORTANCE			
	Opportunity By Level of Governance	% Very	% Somewhat	% Little/No	% NR	Total %
1.	Policy formulation/implementation					
	University	36	37	25	2	100
	College/School	40	44	15	1	100
	Department	66	23	10	1	100
2.	Learn about organization and operation					
	University	48	35	14	3	100
	College/School	51	38	10	1	100
	Department	66	26	7	1	100
3.	Learn about higher education issues					
	University	42	37	16	5	100
	College/School	40	39	18	3	100
	Department	47	34	17	2	100

Table 3: (continued)

Questionnaire Item	Item description and response distribution (%)				
	DEGREE OF IMPORTANCE				
Opportunity By Level of Governance	% Very	% Somewhat	% Little/No	% NR	Total %
4. Learn management techniques and issues					
University	27	34	35	4	100
College/School	25	37	34	4	100
Department	36	32	30	2	100
5. Interact with people in other disciplines					
University	57	34	6	3	100
College/School	56	37	5	2	100
Department	47	25	25	3	100
6. To become better known to colleagues					
University	49	39	9	3	100
College/School	51	38	9	2	100
Department	48	30	21	1	100

Table 4 presents data regarding beliefs about the importance of participating in governance for tenure, promotion and salary increases. Participation in governance was perceived to be less significant for salary increase, but more importance was attached to it at the departmental level than at other levels. In fact, participation at the departmental level was generally perceived to be more significant than at other levels for tenure, promotion, and salary increases. Participation in university and college governance was perceived to be more important for promotion than for tenure.

Table 4: Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty (N=296) Beliefs About the Importance of Participation in Governance to Career Advancement and Rewards, by Level of Governance.

Questionnaire Item — Item description and response distribution (%)

G. Summary of perceived importance of participation in governance for tenure, promotion and salary increases.

		DEGREE OF IMPORTANCE				
	Level of Participation	% Much	% Some	% None	% NR	% Total
1.	Tenure					
	University	17	39	41	3	100
	College/School	19	37	40	4	100
	Department	39	35	22	4	100
2.	Promotion					
	University	26	35	37	2	100
	College/School	25	35	37	3	100
	Department	41	30	27	2	100
3.	Salary Increase					
	University	13	28	56	3	100
	College/School	13	28	55	4	100
	Department	26	30	42	2	100

In an attempt to seek explanations for patterns and variations in those faculty attitudes that were the primary foci of the study, the several response items were examined for differences due to select respondent characteristics: college/school membership, years of service, tenure status, age, rank and sex. The data were subjected to both chi-square and discriminant analyses. Age and sex were found to be relatively unimportant as prediction variables, except that younger faculty appeared more likely than older faculty to favor participation in governance in the academic department. Both years of service and tenure status were found to account for some response variation. In particular, tenure-track faculty were more receptive to sharing the rights and responsibilities of governance with their non-tenure track peers than were tenured faculty. This was particularly true at the higher levels of governance (college/school and senate committees). No significant pattern of differences in attitudes was found by rank.

While the most significant source of variation was found to be due to respondents' college/school affiliation, detailed analyses of the specific differences is incomplete at the time of this writing. Preliminary indications are that college/school membership affects attitudes regarding the rights and responsibilities of participation, as well as the importance of participation to professional development, advancement and rewards.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In their recent monograph, Mortimer, Bagshaw and Masland identify five major advantages of using non-tenure-track appointments: political feasibility; absence of AAUP censure; enrichment of curriculum; staffing flexibility; and clarity and certainty of the faculty member's status (1985, pp.24, 25). We are in general agreement with the conclusions reached by Mortimer, Bagshaw and Masland that the use of non-tenure-track appointments has significant advantages administratively. What their study does not address, however, is the potential effects of increasing numbers of non-tenure-track faculty upon many other aspects of the campus community, especially those pertaining to faculty morale and to the benefits to be derived from the "total" participation of non-tenure-track faculty in university life. It was precisely our concern about these latter kinds of issues that led to conducting this study at Towson State University, where currently non-tenure-track faculty are precluded as a matter of policy from participation in governance at the university level and where their participation at the college/student and departmental levels varies across the institution.

In order to reevaluate these current policies and practices and to take into account faculty preferences, a survey was conducted to determine faculty attitudes regarding the appropriate role of non-tenure-track faculty in governance. The fact that only 3% of non-tenure-track faculty responded to the survey (as compared with 70% of tenured and tenure-track faculty)

strongly suggests that as a group they are less involved with matters directly affecting institutional policy. Whether or not this represents a lack of interest or a feeling of being alienated or disenfranchised is unclear. What is clear is that their tenured and tenure-track colleagues are not prepared to grant them full rights and responsibilities of participation in governance. While there was strong support for allowing and expecting participation at the departmental level, there was less support at the college/school level, and comparatively little support for changes at the university level.

The findings of the study did not justify recommendations for major changes in policy at Towson State University. However, the study was useful in documenting the lack of involvement of non-tenure-track faculty and the resistance of those in tenured and tenure-track positions to according the full rights and responsibilities of governance to their non-tenure-track colleagues.

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